

Progeny of the Koryŏ Dynasty: The Kaesŏng Wang in Chosŏn Korea*

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As the descendants of the Koryŏ dynasty (918–1392) supplanted by the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910), the Kaesŏng Wang negotiated a new sociopolitical terrain in early modern Korea. Once the Chosŏn state ended a bloody persecution (1394–1416) which virtually exterminated the Wangs, the lucky survivors and their descendants performed the state-sanctioned ancestor veneration ritual of sacrificial offering (*pongsa*) to Koryŏ kings. Moreover, many passed the government service examinations, entered officialdom, commanded armies, and constituted local elite lineages in various parts of Korea. The most privileged among the Wangs were no different from the general aristocracy, *yangban*, pursuing classical Chinese education and prescribing to Confucian moral norms such as the cardinal virtue of a subject's loyalty (*ch'ung*) to the ruler. All the same, an emerging body of subversive narratives, written and oral, began expressing sympathy toward Koryŏ and its progeny as victims of Chosŏn. The Wangs themselves refrained from openly dissenting until after the end of the Chosŏn dynasty.

Keywords: Kaesŏng Wang, Chosŏn, Koryŏ, *yangban*, *pongsa*

* Many have provided helpful feedback and assistance during the various stages of my research and writing for this study. I would like to thank Ahn Yootack, Don Baker, Frank L. Chance, John B. Duncan, Hong Soon-Min, Kang Hosun, David L. Howell, Sun Joo Kim, Kim Yong-Sun, Noh Kwan-Bum, Sem Vermeersch, B. C. A. Walraven, and Yang Jin-Suk.

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